


# SFY 2025 Indigenous Roots

Final Report

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Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development
Employment and Training Programs Division

Kay Tracy, Director
Office of Youth Development
(Phone) 651-259-7555
Kay.Tracy@state.mn.us

mn.gov/deed

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## Introduction

Indigenous Roots was granted state funding to develop, along with its partner, Cypher Side Dance School, the Cypher Side Youth Work Experience Program. The initiative was designed to specifically address the critical need for soft skills and career readiness training among marginalized youth in the Twin Cities. It also addresses the gap in traditional workforce programs by leveraging the cultural power and structure of dance and hip-hop culture. By turning dance instruction and studio operations into a structured professional learning environment, the program provides a low-barrier, culturally relevant entry point for youth to gain essential job skills.

Funds for this project are appropriated in Minnesota Session Laws – 2024, Chapter 120, S.F. 5289, Article 1, Section 2, Subdivision 3(p). The amount available to the Indigenous Roots in SFY 2025 is $95,000.00 (Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development is permitted to retain up to 5% of the $100,000.00 appropriation for administration and monitoring of the grant). This is a one-time appropriation.

## Summary of Goals and Objectives Presented in the Work Plan

The Indigenous Roots program operates as a structured professional learning experience offered to youth, aged 14–24, residing in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area (Ramsey, Hennepin, and surrounding counties). The program actively emphasizes reaching individuals who are underrepresented and from communities of color.

Youth are recruited through the existing customer base of Cypher Side Dance School and through social media/advertising. Once enrolled, they participate in professional learning experiences at the Cypher Side Dance School facilities.

The program offers opportunities such as:

- Teaching assistants or instructor aides
- Administrative or clerical support
- Event assistant
- Performance team member

Participants are engaged in work that develops a range of career soft/readiness skills: leadership, mentorship, interpersonal communication, teamwork skills, and executive abilities such as planning, organizing, coordinating, and scheduling. All activities are guided by Cypher Side staff, including two directors, twelve instructors/coaches, and administrative personnel, who provide constant oversight and mentorship. Youth are encouraged to take the lead on projects and actively participate in designing their learning experience, such as creating project timelines and daily checklists.

## Participant Data

Participant data from July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2026 is listed below.

## Demographic Data

**Total Participants Served: 15**

| Gender | Total |
|---|---|
| Male | 5 |
| Female | 10 |
| Other | 0 |
| Prefer Not to Answer | 0 |

| Age | Total |
|---|---|
| 14-15 | 3 |
| 16-17 | 2 |
| 18-19 | 7 |
| 20-21 | 3 |
| 22-24 | 0 |

| Race/Ethnicity | Total |
|---|---|
| Hispanic/Latino | 0 |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 0 |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 12 |
| Black, African American, or African | 0 |
| White | 2 |
| Multiracial | 1 |
| Other/Not disclosed | 0 |

| Education Level | Total |
|---|---|
| 8th grade and under | 0 |
| 9th Grade – 12th Grade | 5 |
| High School Graduate or equivalent | 0 |
| Post-Secondary Education | 2 |

| Other Demographics | Total |
|---|---|
| Limited English proficient | 0 |
| Receiving Public Assistance | 3 |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 0 |
| Participants who report a disability | 0 |
| High school drop-out | 0 |
| Participants who are justice involved | 0 |
| Pregnant or parenting youth | 0 |
| Foster Youth (or aged out of foster care) | 0 |
| Homeless or Runaway youth | 0 |
| Not employed at program enrollment | 3 |
| Veteran | 0 |

## Program Services and Activities Data

| Program Service or Activity | Total |
|---|---|
| Received Education or Job Training Activities | 15 |
| Received Work Experience Activities | 15 |
| Received Community Involvement and Leadership Development Activities | 15 |
| Received Mentoring Activities | 15 |
| Received Internship or Apprenticeship Activities | 15 |
| Received Case Management, Guidance, Counseling Services | 15 |

## Outcome Data

| Performance or Outcome | Total |
|---|---|
| Attained Work Readiness or Education Goals | 15 |
| Number of participants rating experience as “Very Good” | 15 |

# Expenditure Data

Expenditures from July 25, 2024 through April 30, 2026 for grant 5IR6300:

| Budget Category | SFY 2025 Budget | SFY 2025 Expenditure through April 2026 |
|---|---|---|
| Administration | $9,500.00 | $9,430.00 |
| Direct Services/Project Staff | $63,500.00 | $63,455.40 |
| Participant Wages | $22,000.00 | $22,114.60 |
| **Total** | **$95,000.00** | **$95,000.00** |

# Outcomes and Program Highlights

The Cypher Side Youth Work Experience Program has demonstrated early impact, transforming passionate youth into confident career ready leaders. Participants received hands-on workforce development training through a combination of youth dance instruction performance opportunities and leadership responsibilities at the Cypher Side Dance School. Responsibilities have included leading and assisting youth dance lessons, supporting student engagement and classroom management, participating in rehearsals and performances, and collaborating with instructors and peers in a professional team environment. Through direct mentorship from Cypher Side leadership and instructors, participants developed transferable work skills including communication, leadership, teamwork, professionalism, time management, public speaking, and youth engagement within a structured arts setting.

Participants have demonstrated strong leadership, artistic excellence, and community involvement through high profile events across Minnesota. Highlights include performing for over 1000 attendees at the Minnesota State Fair on Hmong Minnesota Day and co-leading cultural outreach during the Hmong Arts Celebration at the Mall of America. Additionally, participants developed key organizational skills by planning and executing the Cypher Side dance battle in the Mall of America Rotunda. All participants developed instructional leadership and youth mentorship skills by assisting and leading dance classes. They built professional performance experience, teamwork, and stage confidence through rehearsals, showcases, and community performances and increased

career readiness and transferable workforce skills through leadership communication professionalism and workplace responsibility.

## Story of Impact

S's journey exemplifies how the program converts passion into professional prowess. After seven years as a student at Cypher Side, S entered the program, marking this past year as her first time teaching. She rapidly progressed from a Junior Assistant Coach to the Main Junior Hip Hop Coach in June 2025.

Reflecting on her growth, S states, "The skills I've picked up since I've started include leadership, organization, creativity, collaborative, being articulative, being a team player, being more assertive especially while teaching or being a part of a group, coaching younger dancers, and the ability to pick things up quickly."

S' s responsibilities expanded to high-profile work-based learning opportunities. Throughout 2025, she assisted teams at competitions like Breakout and Hall of Fame, managed students during high visibility public performances at the Project Hope Festival (Union Depot) and the Minnesota State Capitol, and co-managed the annual Student Showcase. In August 2025, she reached a milestone by facilitating and teaching her first solo auditions for the new season, officially taking over as the lead instructor on September 11, 2025. Her leadership culminated in a major achievement on March 28, 2026, when she led her Junior Hip Hop team to a 1st place victory at the national Groove Dance Competition.

Her program duties quickly expanded to high profile work-based learning opportunities, including managing her students for major public performances at the State Capitol and the Project Hope Festival, as well as choreographing and dancing in a Hmong Arts Event at the Mall of America. Beyond classroom instruction, S has established herself as a sought-after choreographer and performer across Minnesota. In late 2025, she performed and choreographed for major cultural showcases at the Mall of America, working alongside international stars including Zong Pha Xiong and P.A.P BEATBAND.

Crucially, the career readiness skills gained directly in the program enabled her external professional success: "It has also helped me become better with communication when it comes to opportunities in the real world." As a direct result of the skills and determination she gained in the program, S was accepted into and is a successful member of two professional NBA Timberwolves entertainment groups; The Pups (2 years) and the 612 Crew (2+ ongoing years). She considers this a huge accomplishment, stating, "I wouldn't have gotten here if it wasn't for the program. It has helped with my determination to be a part of those groups because I love performing in front of huge crowds!"

## New Grant Funds

As of April 30, 2026, state funds for grant 5IR6300 were 100% expended. No new direct appropriation funds have been granted to Indigenous Roots for the SFY 26-27 biennium.